

Suspended sentence after two armed raids

A MAN who produced a hatchet and a mallet in separate raids on shops in Waterford has avoided a prison term.

Shane Connolly (33), of 35 Ardmore Park in Ballybeg, received suspended sentences totalling three years at Waterford Circuit Court on Tuesday of last week.

Connolly previously pleaded guilty to stealing €255 from the Carry Out off-licence on Barrack Street on August 18th, 2013, and to the production of a hatchet on the same date.

Connolly admitted robbing Tommy Farrell's service station in Tramore on December 11th of last year.

Detective Garda Maureen Neary told Judge Pauline Codd Connolly entered the Carryout off-licence at 7.40pm on the date in question, approaching a member of staff.

He produced a hatchet from a rucksack he was carrying, raised it up and ordered the man to empty the till.

The event would affect him for weeks to come, while he was suspicious and nervous of any customers who entered the shop. Connolly made off with €255 in cash and was apprehended a short while later after being identified by CCTV with the money being recovered.

Garda Colin Nolan told the court that a male entered Tommy Farrell's service station with a wooden mallet and demanded money, in a separate incident on December 11th last.

Shane Connolly attempted to get behind the counter and threatened the male and female shop assistants, in an incident that occurred shortly after 6pm.

One staff member managed to take the mallet from Connolly, dragged him out of the shop and locked him in a coal shed until the Gardaí arrived.

Garda Nolan confirmed that Connolly had consumed "quite a lot" of alcohol.

Coleman Cody SC, defending, said that his client had a long history of employment but became addicted to substances, eventually losing his job.

Connolly has attended counselling treatment, is now employed on a part-time basis and has sent letters of apology to both victims.

"It wouldn't be in the interest of justice to send this man to prison," Mr Cody said.

Judge Pauline Codd handed down a two-year sentence, which she suspended for two and a half years, for stealing €255 from the Carry Out off-licence.

For the attempted robbery of Tommy Farrell's garage, she sentenced Connolly to one year in prison, suspending it for a one-year period. The sentences are to run concurrently.

Connolly must remain under the auspices of the probation services, continue to undergo urine analysis, remain off illicit substances, attend all counselling as directed and has been bound to keep the peace.